

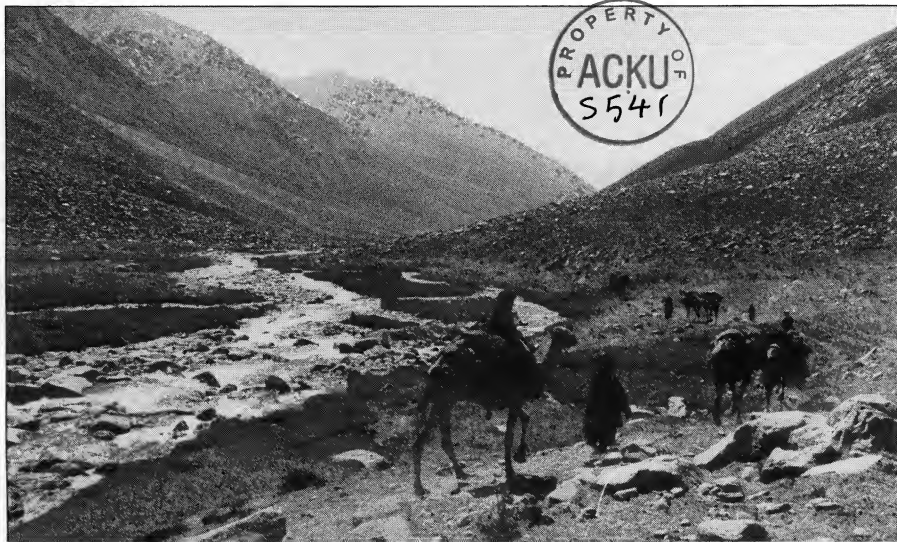
# Afghanistan

## -a Spirit of Resistance



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*Nuristan—the day after this photograph was taken some of these refugees were killed when Russian jets bombed their camp. Others died from their injuries on the gruelling route out to Pakistan.*

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# FOREWORD

*Foreword by the Viscount Cranborne MP, Chairman of the Afghanistan Support Committee and Afghanaid*

Five years ago the Soviet army invaded Afghanistan. The invasion triggered a freeze in East-West relations.

Now, talk is all of disarmament and peace between Soviet Russia and the liberal democracies. Public opinion glimpses the chance of accommodation with the Soviets and politicians both in and out of office respond eagerly, hoping against hope that this time the talks can produce something concrete. If a deal emerges from Geneva that leads to even a minimal halt to the arms race the peace loving public of the West will heave a sigh of relief and their representatives will look to the next election with confidence, not to say complacency.

Deals with the Soviets appeal to Western politicians and their electorates as seductively as jam to a wasp. In any deal it will behove the West to remember the price. Indeed, the West itself may not pay the immediate price. France, the United Kingdom and the United States rightly want to celebrate the 40th Anniversary of VE day in 1985. The Soviet Union with its 20 million dead in Hitler's war will outdo the West in its zeal to commemorate Stalin and Zhukov's victory. Will the people of Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Rumania, Bulgaria and East Germany join in with the same enthusiasm? While the British can rejoice that the Nazis were defeated, how bitterly will the subject peoples of Eastern Europe reflect that for them the defeat of Hitler brought only the exchange of one tyranny for another. Could the Hungarians have imagined in 1945 that their nation would again struggle against a foreign power only to be crushed ruthlessly in 1956, or the Czechs with similar results in 1968, or the Poles? The West, in its desire for peace, risks forgetting that the peoples subject to the Kremlin's rule will pay the price for any deal that is struck with the Soviets, just as they have been paying for the uneasy peace since 1945.

The West tacitly accepts the 1945 political settlement in Europe. The risks of not doing so are too great. The peoples of Russia's Eastern European satellites accept it too and for the same reason. Indeed, they will continue to do so until the Soviet regime's growing political and economic ossification enables them to challenge the status quo with relative impunity.

The people of Afghanistan are different. They do not accept that they should be abandoned to Soviet domination and, in spite of the muddled signals it was sending the Soviets until Christmas 1979, neither as yet does the West. Each year in November, an overwhelming majority at the United Nations condemns the Soviet intervention. The Pakistanis and the Karmal regime continue to negotiate under the auspices of the United Nations at Geneva, and Pakistan still adheres to its four principles as preconditions for a settlement. Public opinion in the West, when asked, sympathises with the Afghan Resistance, just as it sympathised with Dubcek and Walesa. Nevertheless, Afghanistan is a

long way from London or Washington and we want to do a deal with the Soviets. Besides, the Russians installed Karmal five years ago and outrage only remains fresh for a short time. Is it worth wasting sympathy on the Afghans, divided and ill-equipped, they can hardly defeat the overwhelming force of the Red army, so why irritate the Soviets by supporting a cause doomed to failure?

Afghans need our support first of all on humanitarian grounds. The Soviets in Afghanistan do not suffer from the delicacy of feeling the Americans experienced in Vietnam. In Afghanistan they aim to subjugate rather than to win the population's hearts and minds. To this end they destroy crops and livestock, they bomb villages and they indoctrinate the young. The West has responded magnificently to the three million Afghans who have taken refuge from persecution in Pakistan, but, partly out of ignorance and partly out of political cowardice, it has, with the exception of a few volunteers, ignored the areas of real need inside Afghanistan itself, where hundreds of thousands are homeless and in danger of famine. Yet it is possible to send humanitarian aid inside Afghanistan and it would be monstrous not to do so.

The Afghan Resistance never consisted solely of disparate groups, riven by tribal feuds and the pursuit of ancient vendettas. The last five years have led to the emergence of a number of efficient commanders across the country who are beginning to co-operate surprisingly effectively. There is every reason to suppose that their co-operation and effectiveness is only in its infancy. However, they cannot survive on their own. Guerilla warfare, in order to be effective, must be combined with political pressure. The Afghan Resistance as it matures can become an increasingly effective source of political pressure on the Soviets.

The West has shown its almost infinite capacity for compassion in Ethiopia. On humanitarian grounds, it cannot allow its compassion for the plight of the Afghans to become stale after five long years. The West is understandably seeking an accord with the Soviets. However, to let its support for the Afghans lapse as part of the price for that accord would be both criminal and, more important, foolish. It would not only signal its own willingness to sacrifice the liberty of millions to its desire for an agreement, but would prove to the Soviets that in the end the West will accept almost any enormity in exchange for a quiet life. Were the Soviets to believe such a thing nothing in the long run would prove more inimical to the cause of peace.



*The Viscount Cranborne MP*

# Statements issued on the Fifth Anniversary of the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan (27 December 1984)

## From the Foreign and Commonwealth Office:

It is now five years since the Soviet Army invaded Afghanistan. The Afghan people, victims of a relentless and brutal war, continue to suffer. Tens of thousands have died or suffered atrocious injuries. Hunger and disease afflict those displaced by the fighting, many of whose villages have been razed to the ground. Each day hundreds flee the country to join the millions already given refuge in Pakistan and Iran. Rejected by the population, over a fifth of which has—to use Lenin's phrase—voted with its feet, the Karmal Regime relies completely on the Soviet presence in the country to stay in power, and even with the help of more than 100,000 Soviet troops, the Government's authority barely extends beyond the main cities.

Soviet troops have failed to prevent the Afghan Resistance carrying their fight for independence into every province and, this year, into the streets of the capital, Kabul. Their struggle against overwhelming odds has earned them the admiration of people throughout the world. The international community underlined its continuing concern last November when the United Nations General Assembly voted overwhelmingly, and by a record majority, for a resolution demanding the immediate withdrawal of foreign troops.

The British Government supports the continuing efforts of the United Nations Secretary General to reach an internationally acceptable settlement based on principles defined in successive United Nations General Assembly resolutions. We admire the Government of Pakistan's principled commitment to the success of these negotiations.

But progress will not be possible until the Soviet Union agrees to withdraw its forces from Afghanistan. Only then will the suffering of the Afghan people end.

## Extract from the statement issued by the European Community:

"The Ten, together with the overwhelming majority of UN Member States, condemned this violation of international law and of the Soviet Union's obligations under the UN charter. They remain deeply concerned about the continuing illegal occupation by the Soviet Union of that traditionally neutral and non-aligned country. They condemn the continuing violations of Human Rights in Afghanistan and in particular, the extensive shelling and bombing by Soviet Forces of civilian areas, in their efforts to suppress the Resistance, which have resulted in widespread destruction and loss of life. They are concerned at reports of food shortages, malnutrition and high infant mortality in rural areas of Afghanistan resulting from this policy."

## Statement by the French Minister for External Relations:

"In Afghanistan, five years after the Soviet invasion, the *fait accompli* is still an act of violence and has not created a lawful situation. As time goes by, injustice is not diminishing but growing worse.

"Once again, France stressed the imperative necessity, out of respect for the principles of the United Nations Charter and with a view to international tension being reduced, of a speedy implementation of the resolutions of the United Nations General Assembly aimed at obtaining the withdrawal of the foreign troops, free self-determination for the Afghan people, the restoration of Afghanistan's non-alignment and the voluntary resettlement of the refugees to their homes."

## Extract from the statement issued by the Deputy Foreign Minister Encik Abdul Kadir Bin Haji Sheikh Fadzir of Malaysia:

"Malaysia recalls with deep regret the tragic event which took place this day in 1979 when Soviet forces invaded Afghanistan. This is indeed a clear example of super-power intervention and interference in the internal affairs of a small and non-aligned nation. The invasion was a blatant violation of the principles of respect for the independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Afghanistan and it also constitutes a serious threat to world peace and security, to which the international community cannot remain silent.

"It is disheartening to note that despite the progress achieved in the efforts of the United Nations Secretary General to find an honourable political solution to the Afghan problem so far, of late the Kabul regime has stepped up its attacks on the Afghan Mujahedeen. This is indeed a reflection of the indifference and total disregard by the Kabul regime to the call made by the United Nations, the non-aligned movement and the Organisation of Islamic Conference for the withdrawal of foreign troops, the restoration of the sovereignty and independence of Afghanistan and for Afghanistan to remain truly non-aligned.

"On this day, 27 December, which marks the fifth year of the Soviet presence in Afghanistan, Malaysia also appeals to the international community to give its continued support to the struggle of the Afghan Mujahedeen, for it is the responsibility of every nation which believes in justice to ensure the success of their struggle against Soviet aggression and occupation."

## Extract from the statement issued by the President of the United States of America:

"For five years, the Soviet Army has waged war on the proud and deeply religious people of Afghanistan, and there is still no end in sight. Nonetheless, for five years, the people of Afghanistan, with legendary courage, have fought the occupying Soviet forces to a standstill.

"The Afghan freedom fighters—the Mujahedeen—remind us daily that the human spirit is resilient and tenacious, and that liberty is not easily stolen from a people determined to defend it. The Afghan people are writing a new chapter in the history of freedom. We Americans salute their magnificent courage.

"We join our voice with other members of the world community in calling for a prompt, negotiated end to this brutal conflict.

"The history of independent Afghanistan goes back more than 2,000 years and is far from being finished. My deepest hope is to speak of freedom restored to Afghanistan by this time next year.

"We will not forget the people of Afghanistan who are struggling to live once again among the free nations of the world. These brave people will continue to have the support of all Americans in their noble struggle."

## From the Swedish Ambassador to the United Nations:

"The armed intervention by the Soviet Union in Afghanistan constitutes a grave violation of fundamental rules for international relations and must be unequivocally condemned. The United Nations Charter admits no exceptions to its prohibition of the use of force against the territorial integrity and political independence of other states.

"Advanced military technology is used in Afghanistan in an attempt to suppress the popular resistance. The situation has been aggravated by the Soviet policy of indiscriminate bombings, including area bombardment from high altitude. These military tactics have resulted in immense suffering for the civilian population and considerable destruction of the material and economic infrastructure.

"While fully supporting the efforts of the Secretary-General, my Government is nevertheless concerned that the situation in Afghanistan itself is going from bad to worse. A most necessary diplomatic process is kept in motion. This does not change the fact that a lasting solution to the problem requires an end to Soviet aggression against the people of Afghanistan. The single most important element in finding a political solution is the prompt withdrawal of the Soviet forces from Afghanistan."

# A Five Year Assessment: 1979-1984

by Olivier Roy

Olivier Roy is a French writer who, in the course of research for his dissertation on the Afghanistan Resistance, has spent several months each year with various groups of Mujahedeen and travelled extensively throughout Afghanistan. He is regarded as a knowledgeable and unbiased observer of the situation there.

When the Soviets invaded Afghanistan on 27 December 1979, most military observers did not give the Afghan Resistance much chance of survival. Now, five years later, it is clear that the Soviets are unable to crush the Afghan Resistance, and that is not just because they do not want to pay the cost. In 1984, the Soviets increased their military effort using elite paratroops in major assaults on the Panjshir valley. At the same time, they mounted large-scale offensives in Herat and Kandahar. The result is now clear: despite large scale destruction of crops and property, the Afghan Resistance continues unabated. More strikingly, Massood regained two-thirds of the Panjshir, with relatively few losses, whilst Soviet casualties were higher this year. It would not be sensible for the Soviets to bring in fresh conventional forces because only paratroopers do well in Afghanistan, and there are already two paratroop divisions, (from a total of eight) in Afghanistan. To increase their effort the Soviets would have to withdraw troops from Europe, which they are unlikely to do.

But the fighting spirit of the Mujahedeen does not mean that the resistance is at the same level everywhere. There is a growing discrepancy between areas where resistance is becoming professionalised (Panjshir, Herat, Kabul and Kandahar) and areas where failure to confront forces led to internal feuds, desertion and carelessness. In the first areas, the Afghan Resistance is a real challenge to the Soviet army; even gunship helicopters do not risk flight at low altitude, because of the growing effectiveness of Afghan anti-aircraft weapons; the Mujahedeen are now well-equipped and experienced. The problem is that the civilian population is obliged to leave combat areas, and they and the guerrillas may face food shortages. Elsewhere, internal feuds remained important in 1984, especially in the Hazarajat, where the Shi'a minority is split along lines familiar to Iran: revolutionary pro-Iranians are fighting against traditionalists, with the full support of Iran; the situation changes rapidly. Only one Shi'a party, the Harakat-Islami of Sheikh Assef Mohseni, is really devoting its time to fighting the Soviets, south of Mazar-i-Sharif and near Kabul and Ghazni. Internal conflicts are encouraged by the Khad, the state secret police, which has been more successful than the army.

In fact, the army is even less effective than it was three years ago, and the Soviets are no longer even trying to rebuild it: they now send their own troops to the front line. But the build-up of government militia has been more successful: they are not recruited on any political or ideological basis, but fight for



*An Afghan cartoon mocking Babrak Karmal's recent pretensions to good faith as a Muslim. He is, in fact a life-long Marxist-Leninist and therefore an atheist.*

cash and in pursuit of the traditional rivalries between ethnic groups, tribes and clans. The militia is not mobile and so is unable to hunt the guerillas in their strongholds (this remains the task of the Soviets), but it can deny specific areas to the Mujahedeen and their approach to some Soviet bases. Real loyalties are not involved and whole militia groups might join the Mujahedeen at any time.

On the political level, the situation has not much improved for the Afghan Resistance. Of course, international support, if we consider the annual vote at the UN, remains, but too often this is just lip-service, although the quantity of weapons reaching the Mujahedeen has increased in the last five years. A common argument runs that international support will increase when Afghan Resistance is united, but few seem to be eager to see such a real unification. Pakistan fears a kind of "Palestinisation" of the Resistance, which will deprive Pakistan of political control and may cause a Soviet backlash that may endanger its stability for it has no guarantee from the USA of its territorial integrity which (for the moment) the Americans would not feel able to give.

The Saudis continue to back Sayaf, who is not effective inside Afghanistan and is highly controversial in Peshawar. Pakistan's Jamiat-Islami is backing Hekmatyar's Hezb-Islami, which devotes itself more to killing Afghans than Soviets. The more active of the Afghan parties (Jamiat of Rabbani, Hezb of Khaled, Harakat-Islami of Mohseni) lack international support, despite the fact that the best commanders (Massood, Abdul Haq, Zabiullah, Ismail Kahn, Jelalludin) are members. Of course, there are many internal factors to explain divisions within the Resistance (eg the ethnic, tribal and political segmentation of Afghan society), but external factors (essentially the lack of any political will to see the

building of a real and effective alliance) are the main obstacles to progress.

The Americans, who are closely watching the military situation, under-estimate the necessity of a political structure to strengthen military resistance. The Americans still cherish the romantic vision of "inside commanders" as opposed to "corrupt" political leaders in exile. So if the US Government is clearly in favour of the unification of the Resistance, no practical steps towards an effective alliance (as opposed to a purely symbolic one) will be taken.

The Soviets are becoming more and more uneasy about the war. The Soviet press now reports on the fighting and signs of discontent have appeared among non-European Soviet minorities, especially Muslims. Of course, the Soviet Union is not yet hopelessly bogged down in the Afghanistan war, but long-run side effects may become a real problem: on the internal side, with the emergence of a Muslim national identity (or even an Islamic revival), on the external side, in her relations with Muslim countries, especially with Iran, who will inevitably become more involved when the Gulf war ends.

What of the future? There will be no military defeat of the Afghan Resistance, although it will continue to suffer local setbacks. The Soviets are waging a long-term war of attrition, they rely on the Sovietisation of the urban elite (especially the young) and neglect of the peasants. They will need years to achieve such a problematic aim. This policy will fail only if resistance becomes strong enough to strike at the core of Soviet Military dispositions and if the Resistance could intervene effectively on the diplomatic scene. These two conditions depend on the amount of foreign aid for the Afghan Resistance. ■

# Evolution of Soviet military tactics



Flags flutter in the wind on the top of a pass overlooking the Panjshir Valley. They mark the graves of Mujahedeen who died, not in action but, in their sleep. Surprised under cover of dark, they died at the hands of Soviet commandos. The Resistance had no lookouts. Until recently they were thought unnecessary. But Soviet tactics are changing, as they adapt themselves to deal with guerilla warfare in a difficult terrain.

When their forces rumbled into Afghanistan in December 1979 their primary objective was to shore-up the Afghan Government. At first it was principally a holding and protection operation, around major towns and lines of communication. There was no attempt to occupy the whole country—this was never their intention, and would have been impossible because of the vast numbers necessary for such an operation. Their troops were sent in to back-up the Afghan Government forces, but the Afghans proved wholly unreliable. Many quickly lost their loyalty to the Government and its new masters. Desertions have become increasingly common, often with weapons. Others remained and worked from within, leaking information to the Mujahedeen.

The Soviet conscript forces were poorly trained, low in morale, and more specifically, lacked training in counter-insurgency operations in terrain which calls for "low intensity" techniques. The Soviet's most important campaigns have been fought on the flat plains of Europe, with few obstacles, and their whole training, organisation and tactics evolved within the context of this sort of warfare. In Afghanistan their troops were used initially in ponderous, large scale attacks, seldom without armoured vehicles to hide behind. They were of little use in the rough and mountainous terrain which makes

up a large proportion of the country. Often they proved highly vulnerable, especially when the Mujahedeen held the high ground.

As with most of their operations, everything was planned in advance down to the last detail, leaving little scope for individual initiative. The inevitable lack of quick response in engagements frequently allowed the Mujahedeen to slip through their net.

Unable to catch the agile Mujahedeen the Soviets turned their attention to civilians. Seemingly adopting Mao's much quoted counter-guerilla tactic that to catch the fishes you must drain the pond, Soviet forces began retaliatory airstrikes on nearby villages in revenge for Resistance attacks. In one action, in the early stages of the war, 105 villagers were burned alive in a tunnel. Not surprisingly, many civilians fled into the mountains or to the main cities. Others could see no future in their wrecked homes and farms; an estimated 4½ million have sought refuge in Pakistan and Iran. For those determined to stay in their own country the excruciatingly hard life in the mountains, lack of food and warm clothing this winter could prove disastrous. Some communities in northern areas face starvation.

Despite being bogged down in a protracted war, Afghanistan has proven an excellent testing ground for the Soviets to test their equipment and techniques, as well as battle training for their forces. Extensive use of air power, including intimidating helicopter gunships, has wrought havoc on innumerable villages and farms. The original Mi-24 "Hind" helicopter has been regularly modified with new models better adapted to operation in local conditions. For the Mujahedeen, there is a frightening new weapon: the Su-25 "Frogfoot" ground attack

aircraft which "stays around a long time", and is able to direct its awesome firepower accurately in the mountains.

One land-weapon, the BM-21 multiple rocket launcher, has also been used with ruinous effect against the mud houses of Afghan villages thought to be concealing Mujahedeen.

Another weapon which is used to hamper the movements of Mujahedeen, but which fails to discriminate between fighters and civilians, is the anti-personnel mine, of which the most common is the plastic "butterfly mine". Coloured to blend with the terrain, they can blow off a foot or hand. These mines are frequently found scattered on passes and routes from one area to another. Injuries have been inflicted on women, children and livestock. An utter lack of medical facilities within convenient reach often means amputation of limbs, or death from gangrene.

But military activity is only part of the Soviet involvement much of which takes the form of subversion and infiltration. This includes penetration of guerilla organisations, refugee camps, and resistance parties in Pakistan and Iran, together with attempts to subvert the tribes living on the Pakistan/Afghan border.

After some far from successful operations, the Soviets have had to modify their military tactics. They have been forced into a more active role in the war in Afghanistan and this is having an effect on the Soviet Army as a whole. Their intensely conservative concepts of centralised command and referral have had to be modified as junior officers are finding they simply must rely on their initiative in the field, an idea which is only slowly

being accepted by their commanders. As in all armies, active service, in this case in Afghanistan, may lead to accelerated promotion for junior officers, and that may bring fresh ideas to Soviet military thinking.

In the last year there has been a dramatic intensification of the war and changes are becoming more obvious.

1984 saw more and better trained elite troops being used by the Soviets in "search and destroy" operations. Usually landed by helicopter with strong air cover, they take part in sweeping actions aimed at killing and capturing both Mujahedeen and civilians. 18-22 year old conscripts once spear-headed all major Soviet operations in Afghanistan, now they use 28-32 year old special troops. These men are more effective but also more expensive if lost.

For Mujahedeen, and refugees caught in between, the number of attacks on routes into Afghanistan has increased rapidly, particularly in the Eastern provinces. In the first few years of the war, surprisingly little attention was paid to supply routes. Large groups bringing in weapons and supplies

could travel with virtual impunity from Pakistan to areas deep inside the country. Last summer this situation was altered by frequent attacks on, and ambushes of, supply caravans, together with a number of air attacks on Mujahedeen bases on the Pakistan side of the border.

One Resistance commander tells with glee of "ambushing the ambushers": he set up a dummy convoy to attract an ambush by Soviet heliborne troops and lay in wait to surround them. 12 Soviets dressed in the distinctive striped T-shirts of elite troops were killed and one senior officer. These casualties would be almost insignificant amongst conscript forces but are of much greater significance for the only two paratroop divisions stationed in Afghanistan.

This winter the effort to control resistance supply lines has included a concentrated attempt to win decisive control of Afghan army garrisons overlooking the routes. For the first time, large numbers of Soviet heliborne troops have been used in operations in provinces bordering Pakistan to secure garrisons and posts once manned by the Afghan army

and long besieged by the Resistance. Garrisons with landing strips have been primary targets.

If the capture of these posts with elite troops has been difficult, holding onto them could prove even more so. The Soviets cannot afford to station their elite troops there and to leave them under the control of Soviet conscripts could lead to rapid deterioration in morale, something the Soviets cannot afford. The only other option, use of Afghan troops, has already proved disastrous as they defect at the earliest opportunity and leak information to the Resistance.

Will this stretching of Soviet resources compel them to bring yet more forces into Afghanistan in an attempt to "seal the border"? The few divisions of Soviet elite troops are required on other fronts in the Soviet Union—how many can they spare for Afghanistan? With an increasingly effective resistance they risk getting even further bogged down in a war neither side can win militarily.

*Julian Gearing*

## Winter Offensives I: Soviets attempt to seal the Afghan borders

In the past few months, the focus of fighting inside Afghanistan has shifted from concentration of Mujahedeen in such key areas as Panjshir, Logar, Kabul province, Kandahar, Herat and the Eastern provinces bordering on Pakistan. Western diplomatic observers and eyewitnesses seem agreed that the fighting now going on in Paktia, Nangahar and Kunar provinces is an attempt to make it much more difficult for Mujahedeen now in Pakistan for the winter, to return to Afghanistan when the snow melts to continue the war. An estimated 14,000 Soviet troops are being used in an attempt to capture Mujahedeen strongholds overlooking major supply routes. Just how successful they have been is not yet known, but the Resistance Commander, Walid Majrooh, has said that a combined Soviet and Afghan army force trying to relieve the besieged garrison of Barikot at the Northern end of the Kunar valley, was forced to turn back after suffering heavy losses.

The Afghan Government has frequently alleged instances of the shelling of Barikot from the Pakistani side of the border. The almost daily allegations and counter allegations by both Governments of incursions on their respective territories appear to be (in part) a reflection of increased military activity by Soviet and Afghan troops in border areas. A recently reported Soviet tactic aimed at making border crossing more hazardous is the use of mine-spraying artillery shells. A European Parliament member and former French cabinet minister, Jean-Francois Deniau, saw these mines on a clandestine visit to the Kunar valley to mark the fifth anniversary of the Soviet invasion. In an account which aptly sums up the David-and-Goliath nature of the conflict in Afghanistan, the Mujahedeen commander accompanying Deniau said the Resistance had achieved considerable success in detonating these sophisticated mines with stones fired from childrens' catapults.

The Mujahedeen are just as confident that they will be able to overcome other Soviet moves to block their supply routes. But there is mounting evidence that the policy of "sealing Afghanistan's frontiers" which Babrak Karmal first announced last summer, is being vigorously pursued. Western correspondents recently in Quetta reported that it was much more difficult to enter Afghanistan from Baluchistan. And in early January, Western diplomats reported that several thousand Soviet troops were being sent to South West Afghanistan, where the borders

of Pakistan, Afghanistan and Iran converge. The Iranian authorities themselves make unauthorised infiltration into Afghanistan difficult, and this largely flat area is also hazardous for the Mujahedeen to cross on the Afghan side of the border. It seems the Soviets intend to maintain the highly military profile established during the widespread fighting last year. Mujahedeen operations are likely to grow more dangerous in future, and the civilian population inside Afghanistan will undoubtedly, as they have in the past, suffer most.





# Islam in the Afghan Resistance

by Olivier Roy

*This was first published by  
Keeston College, Bromley in April 1984*

The Afghan Resistance sees its struggle more in terms of a "holy war" (jihad) than as a war of national liberation. In a country in which reference to the "nation" is a very recent phenomenon, where the State is perceived as exterior to society and where allegiance belongs to the local community, Islam remains the sole point of reference for all Afghans.

It is only in the southern Pushtun tribal zones and among emigres that ideologies of a secular nature (nationalism and liberalism) play a role. This is understandable in that these tribes are the originators of the Afghan State—which remains tribal and Pushtun; the tribal leaders remain unattached to the religious institutions and their power derives from the tribal code (Pushtunwali) which is quite different from the Muslim law (Sharia). Moreover, the mullah (Muslim priests) have little standing in the tribal zones—whereas, for the other ethnic groups (Tajik, Hazara, Uzbek) and for the more or less detribalised Pushtuns of the Kabul and Nangarhar regions, Islam provides the political ideology of the Resistance.

However great differences are apparent in the manner in which the religion is being reinterpreted in terms of political ideology, leadership and the organisation of society. These differences, combined with the ethnic patchwork which characterises Afghanistan, explain the multiplicity of political parties in the Resistance. Let us briefly review the nine principal parties before examining in detail the evolution of the religious structures during the war period and the reference being made by the civil population to Islam as it organises itself to face the communist regime.

There are six large Sunni and three Shi'a parties (leaving aside small splinter groups). They can be divided into two tendencies: traditionalist and Islamist. The Sunni traditionalists are: Syed Ahmed Gailani's National Islamic Front (Mahaz-i-Milli-i-Islami), a product of a branch of the sufi Qadiriya order; Sibghatullah Mujaddidi's National Liberation Front (Jabha-i-Milli-i-Nejad), originating from a branch of the sufi Naqshbandi order; and Mohammed Nabi Mohammadi's Islamic Revolutionary Movement (Harakat-i-Inqilab-i-Islami) which embodies, principally, the traditional clergy. These three parties are allied and are strongest in the Pushtun south. The traditionalist Shi'a party is called the Revolutionary Council of the Union of Afghanistan (Shura-i-Inqilab-i-Etefaq-i-Afghanistan); it represents the greater part of the Hazara Shi'a ethnic minority which is concentrated in East-Central Afghanistan; the party's management is provided by the traditional clergy, in particular by the Syed (descendants of the Prophet). The Shura is the most clerical of all the parties in the Resistance.

The Islamist parties consist of the Jamiat-i-Islami, led by Professor Burhanuddin Rabbani, the most powerful party in the Resistance, essentially non-Pushtun, whose followers are found in the west and north of the country; and Gulbaddin Hekmatyar's Hezb-i-Islami, well organised and very

sectarian, to be found in most regions but specially among the Pushtun minorities in the north-east. Another Hezb-i-Islami, resulting from a split in the party referred to above, is that of Younis Khalis, to be found in the Nangarhar and Paktia regions. The two Islamist Shi'a parties are Sheikh Assef Mohseni's Harakat-i-Islami, which recruits in the Shi'a towns and has active fronts in Kandahar, Kabul and particularly in Mazar-i-Sharif, and the extremist Hazara party Nasr, pro-Khomeinist and armed by Iran, drawing its recruits from the young Hazara working in Iran. Hekmatyar's Hezb-i-Islami and Nasr represent revolutionary Islamist radicalism and their fight is more against the other parties, whom they accuse of feudalism and pro-Westernism, than against the Soviets.

However, any classification such as that above remains very abstract unless a concrete study is made of the traditional religious figures of Afghan Islam and their evolution during the war of resistance. Such an analysis will make it much more easy to understand the complexities of the Afghan Resistance.

## The religious figures of Afghan Islam

These are the village mullah (priest), the alim (plural ulema) or doctor of Islamic law (called Maulavi in Afghanistan), the charismatic religious leader (and in particular the pir, leader of a tariqa—which is a mystic Muslim sufi order) and finally the young Islamic intellectual, described in Europe as "fundamentalist" and whose appearance on the Afghan religious scene is very recent.

### 1. The village Mullah

The mullah belongs to the village and not to a clergy. He is not aware of belonging to an organised body. He has little to do with the superior clergy (the maulavi) from whom he receives neither payment nor his investiture. It is the consensus of the village which invests the mullah with his office either because he has shown remarkable individual distinction through his piety (and, more rarely, through his knowledge) or because he comes from a particular family or indeed (in tribal areas) from a professional group which has traditionally specialised in the provision of the mullah. (In the latter case the mullah is often non-Pushtun).

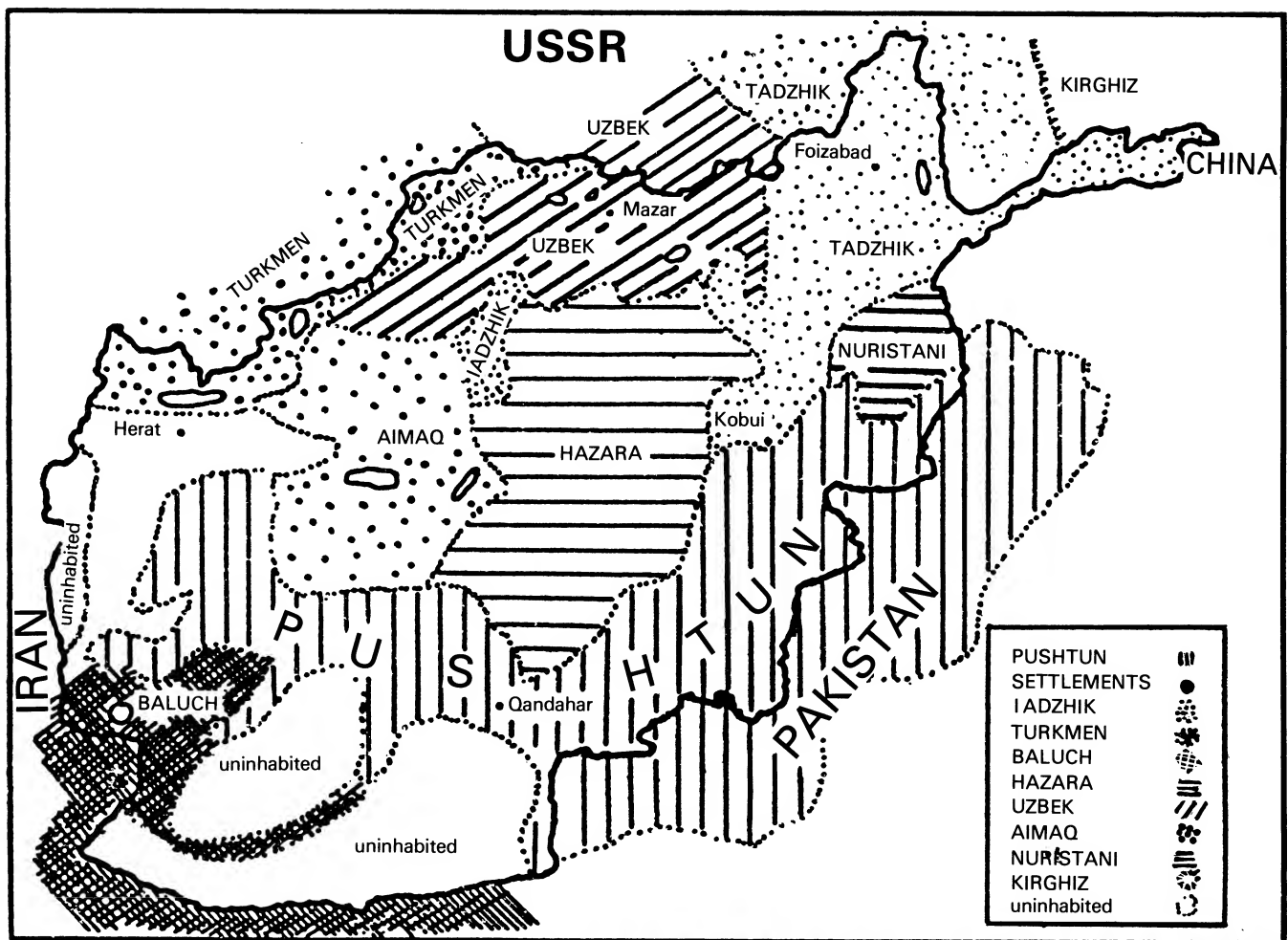
The social status of the mullah varies considerably. It is low in tribal areas because of his exclusion from the tribal community and his assimilation into the despised professional groups; in other areas, his prestige grows in proportion to the extent of his personal knowledge and the importance of his family. The mullah is seldom wealthy and frequently tills the soil. If the richer villagers contribute more than the others to the support of the mullah, this does not mean that he is thereby linked organically to the group of landed property owners. Ill-informed about political life (which is centred in Kabul) and having little political consciousness, for there is no centralised and organised clergy in Afghanistan, the mullah

reacts to communist penetration only when it reaches his village.

**2. The Ulema or Maulavi (doctors of the law)**  
The clergy is no more organised in Afghanistan than it is in the other Sunni countries. The "senior clergy", ulema or maulavi, may be defined as a body more as a result of the way in which it has been trained than because of its position in the political structure.

Until the 1950s the ulema were trained in a non-governmental network of theological schools (madrasa) constituted around local religious personalities. After several years of study, the student of religion either obtained his master's authorisation to become a mullah—and even to open his own madrasa—or else continued his theological studies abroad (in India until 1947, then either in Pakistan or, for the most gifted, at al-Azhar in Cairo). It was only from 1951 that the Afghan State showed enough concern to open a network of state madrasa in the provincial capitals with a curriculum leading to entry to the theological faculty of Kabul, which is an integral part of the state university. Those who graduate from this state network are more open to modern ideas and resemble the Islamist intellectuals of whom we shall speak later. They are generally very politically aware. However, the Afghan maulavi come essentially from the non-governmental network—and this is always the case in the Resistance. Having been trained in conformity with the millennial curriculum, common to the whole Muslim world (classical Arabic, *kalam* or theology, *tafsir* or interpretation of the Koran, *hadith* or tradition of the Prophet, *fikh* or civil religious law) the ulema feel that they belong to the universal Muslim community (the *umma*) rather than to a particular nation. Theirs is certainly an exegetic culture and one of repetition, but also a universalist culture. It nevertheless scarcely manages to provide an ideology capable of thinking in modern terms. As in all Muslim countries, the ulema as a whole have not known how to adapt to the modern world. They became relegated to the fringe of society both economically (the Afghan ulema have never been great property owners) and politically (the modern State depended from its foundation on the tribal elite and, since the sixties, has relied on a technocratic class that has been either liberal in character or Marxist-orientated).

We must however note the presence, from the sixties onwards, of a small minority of teachers at the theological faculty of Kabul who have been trained as traditional ulema at the University of al-Azhar in Cairo and yet possess a much more modern culture. Examples are Gholam Niazi, Dean of the Faculty of Theology, imprisoned under Prince-president Daoud and assassinated under the communist regime, and Rabbani, current President of the Jamiat-i-Islami. These two were to play a great part in the politicisation of the student youth during the sixties and in the forging of a link between the traditionalist ulema and the young Islamist revolutionaries.



### 3. The charismatic leaders of the sufi orders (Muslim mystics)

There is one figure who played a considerable political role in the tribal areas in the nineteenth century and in the first half of the twentieth century. This is the charismatic mullah, a particular type of pir (elder) or spiritual guide. In the midst of the turbulence and segmentation of the tribe, at times of great crisis, the unifying figure could come only from outside—from the syed, from the sufi orders or in the person of the charismatic mullah (the “mad mullah” as he is called by the English). The call to jihad transcends clannish or tribal conflicts and brings (very provisional) unity to the tribes. This was true for the Pushtuns on both sides of the border and in the cases of the Akhund of Swat, of Mullah-i-Lang at Khost, in 1924, and of the Shami Pir of Paktia and the Faqir of Ipi at the same period. It is significant that no phenomenon of this type has appeared in the present resistance movement. Is this one of the signs of the crisis in tribal institutions? Certainly. In any case, the kind of war waged by leaders of this kind would be quite inappropriate for modern guerrillas.

The question of the place of sufism in the Resistance remains. Sufism has always played a big role in anti-colonialist movements. In Soviet Turkestan the opposition to communism came from the sufi orders rather than from the “official” clergy. Moreover, two of the Afghan Resistance parties (of so-called “moderate” or “secular” tendency) are directed by the leaders of the two most fully represented sufi orders in Afghanistan: Sibghatullah Modjaddidi (of the Naqshbandi order) leads the National Liberation Front and Syed Ahmed Gailani (of the Qadiriya order) the Islamic Front.

However, sufism has become established in Afghanistan in two quite distinct practical religious forms:

a) The brotherhood (or *tariqa*) which assumes individual adherence, an intellectual initiation and personal allegiance to the master.

The brotherhood is essentially a spiritual exercise club which does not cut the practising member off from his life in society (and which indeed sometimes underpins professional solidarity with religious solidarity). It offers the believer the opportunity to supplement his spirituality whilst adhering to perfectly orthodox theology. This form of sufism, which was incarnated above all by the Mujaddidi family, is thus in no way opposed to the Islam of the ulema for whom the Mujaddidi family acted as spokesmen at times (eg in the struggle against Amanullah’s reforms in 1928). This category of sufism finds its recruits mainly among the cultivated and traditionalist urban lower middle classes, particularly in Kabul and in the north and west of Afghanistan. In the Resistance, it has provided valuable officers and some good combat groups, those concerned having been broken-in to group discretion and solidarity. But there have been no mass movements, for this conception of sufism has always been elitist. That is why, of the two fronts in the non-tribal areas, only that of the Mujaddidi has attracted some partisans. It does not exercise control over the civilian population but is well-organised on the outskirts of urban districts. Gailani is not represented in the non-tribal areas.

b) Maraboutism which assumes the collective allegiance of a clan or tribe to a family of “saints”, supposedly

endowed with a hereditary *baraka* (divine beneficent force), and which sanctifies, by proxy, a community—whose customary religious practices are in no way modified by this allegiance.

Here, contrary to the case of the true *tariqa*, adherence implies no specific religious practice (eg meditation, initiation). The only mark of adherence is the annual visit to the pir and the offering to him of a “gift”. An institutionalised form of the pir phenomenon which is perpetuated hereditarily in the form of a sufi order; it is indeed the essential nature of the Qadiriya in Afghanistan.

### 4. The Islamist intellectuals

Islamism is a recent phenomenon in the Muslim world. Islamism attempts to think of Islam in terms of a political ideology which is fit to compete with the great ideologies of the West (liberalism, Marxism, nationalism). It borrows the conceptual framework of western political philosophy (the sense of history, the State, the search for a definition of politics) and endeavours to fill it with the traditional concepts of Muslim thought. The most influential thinker among both Shi’as and Sunnis is the Iranian Ali Shariati. The young Islamist intellectuals—who are mainly under 35—are the products of modernist enclaves within the traditional society. The word *roshanfekr* (intellectual) is applicable to any young man who has passed through the modern educational system, whether he claims to be liberal, Marxist or Islamist. In this sense, all these young men share very much the same background and face the same problems. The Islamists are products of the network of state institutions: high schools, faculties (mainly scientific)—but also state



madrasa and the Kabul theological faculty. Their links with the main body of ulema who come from the non-governmental madrasa are therefore, by definition, very ambiguous. Although they may have the same points of reference (Qu'ran, Sunna, Sharia) their position with respect to politics is quite different. By quoting the times of the divine Revelation they circumvent the tradition which generates the main body of ulema. It is this reference to origins which allows them to think along "modern" lines (as in the case of the renaissance Protestants).

These young Islamists became actively militant on the university campus from 1968, against the royalist (and subsequently presidential) regime of Daoud, against the communist penetration of the army and the university and against the Soviet infiltration of the State apparatus. They went out into the country, preaching political sermons, and attempted in vain, an armed uprising in 1975. Their relationship with the ulema remained very distant until 1970 when the traditionalist clergy also began to be concerned about communist penetration. Violently repressed from 1975, they suffered imprisonment (and execution at the hands of the communists in 1979) or went into exile in Pakistan until 1980.

Their movement Sazman-i-Jawana-i-Musalman (Organisation of Islamic Youth) gave birth to the three Sunni Islamist parties (the Jamiat and the two Hezb-i-Islami) which constitute the backbone of the Resistance.

The Shi'a youth also became caught up in political movements. They were particularly subject to Maoist and Hazara nationalist influences (which disappeared in the Resistance). It seems that a movement comparable to the Sazman existed among the Shi'as, incarnated by Sheikh Assef Mohseni. Entitled Sohb-i-Danesh (dawn of knowledge), this movement appears to have been cultural rather than political. Its members later became very active in the Resistance in support of the Harakat-i-Islami (not to be confused with the Harakat-i-Inqilab) led by the same Sheikh.

## The evolution of the religious figures in the Afghan Resistance

### 1. Village mullah and traditional maulavi

Lacking political awareness and ill-informed about events in the capital, most of these did not react immediately to the communist coup d'état in April 1978. It was not until there was direct interference by the communists at village level that their call for a holy war was launched (without their having received any directives from the Peshawar organisations—of which they were completely ignorant). Three elements provided them with an impetus: the agrarian reform which called into question the notion of private property, guaranteed by the Qu'ran; the enforced literacy programme, considered to be closer to political indoctrination than to education (and, in particular, the directive that girls had to attend lessons conducted by men); and finally the massive, indiscriminate arrest of local maulavi in 1979. The uprisings began in the autumn of 1978, culminating in spring 1979. The general pattern was always the same: in the course of the Friday sermon, at the local mosque, the mullah and maulavi called on the population, already in ferment against the regime, to translate their feelings into actions. The people then attacked and seized the local government post, suffering heavy losses because of their lack of arms. Once the district had been liberated, the leaders of the uprising sent emissaries to Peshawar to obtain arms from the bureaux that had been set up there. In cases where Islamist intellectuals (of whom we shall speak again later) were present, the local mullah and maulavi adhered to the Islamist parties (in Herat, Ghor and the north east). However, in most cases, they adhered to the Harakat-i-Inqilab which was seen from the outset, as the rallying point of the traditionalist clergy. This party had a clear majority during the first year of the war against the Soviets (1980) but its influence has

steadily declined, specially in the non-Pushtun areas, in favour of the Jamiat-i-Islami. This loss of influence is due to the difficulty encountered by the traditional clergy in assuming the role of military and political leaders, for which they were scarcely prepared.

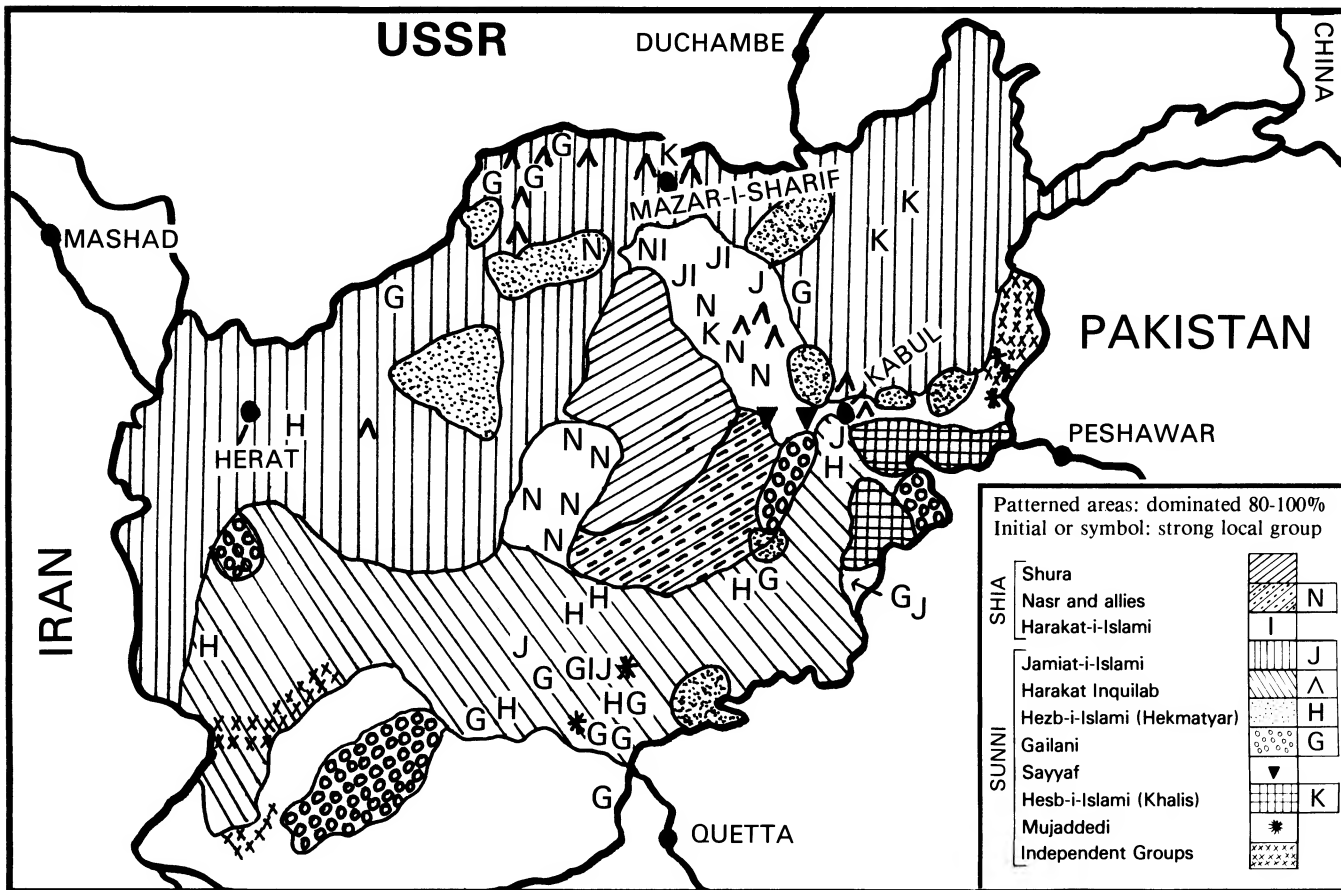
### 2. Charismatic leaders of the sufi orders

As we have seen, the tribal areas (thus the Pushtuns in the south-east) provide favourable terrain for the production of charismatic leaders and sufi orders of the marabout type. However, not only has no religious charismatic leader figure emerged during this war, but the two parties founded by pir in these regions (Mujaddidi, but especially Gailani with his national Islamic Front) are essentially tribal and secular; they constitute, in the Resistance, the royalist, pro-western, "moderate" pole, speak on behalf of the old regime establishment and are in opposition to the other "secular" parties.

All these epithets may be seen to have a common link: These two parties are "tribal" because their social basis is constituted essentially by the tribes—for whom they perform the function of "mediation", previously devolving upon the charismatic pir.

There is a link with the "royalist" milieu because the monarchy in Afghanistan is tribal in origin, and with the "establishment", at least in the case of Gailani. This great family enriched by the annual gifts of the faithful—but swiftly divested of all real spiritual preoccupation—became integrated into the upper middle class of Kabul by investing its money there. (Gailani was the Peugeot representative for Afghanistan).

The two parties can also be called "secular", less because of sufism (we have seen that the Mujaddidi family spoke on behalf of the ulema in 1928) than on account of tribalism, based on the tribal code (Push-tunwali) and on the power of traditional dignitaries who have had no connection with the religious institutions. (A tribal leader, contrary to the practice of the mediaeval



European aristocracy, will never send his child to study theology; the status of the mullah is inferior to that of a warrior in the tribal areas). Thus, tribalism would have everything to lose through the return of the ulema—not to mention the Islamists.

The only problem is that the two parties suffer all the defects of the tribal system without providing an organisation or an ideology capable of overcoming them. The defects are those of patronage, the inability to wage modern guerrilla warfare (tribal war is always based on raid and plunder), segmentation (each class or tribe attends first to its own particular interests) and pustunism (the secular parties claim to be fighting a war of national liberation but their only definition of the nation is that of a tribal confederation united in a jirgah or tribal assembly).

### 3. The return of the Islamist intellectuals

Exiled to Pakistan from 1975, well before the communist coup d'état, the young Islamists had maintained a political structure in the form of two well-organised parties. The more important of these until 1981 was Hekmatyar's Hezb-i-Islami (from which the Khalis maulavi broke away in 1979); then came Rabbani's Jamiat-i-Islami which is now dominant. Both of these, organised like modern political parties, with an information section, a military section, a cultural committee etc maintained a slender clandestine network within the country under the communist government.

After the spontaneous uprising of 1979, they returned from exile to organise the Resistance. They were very unevenly distributed: plentifully in the north-east quarter (Panjshir, Baghlan, Kunduz, Mazar) and in Herat (in other words in the more educationally advanced, Persian speaking areas and close to towns) but sparsely in the tribal areas and the more remote regions. The acceptance of these young intellectuals depends on their relations with the local ulema. With the Jamiat and the Khalis party, this partnership has been successful whilst in Hekmatyar's party, the young radicals have often shown themselves to be hostile towards the traditionalists (particularly towards the brotherhoods). The partnership is closest where the ulema have been educated in the state madrasa, which are strongly influenced by the Jamiat-i-Islami.

In most cases, these young men, who have a more political and a more modern vision of Islam, have proved to be better military commanders and better organisers than the ulema (and better still than the tribal chiefs). An example is the Panjshir Commander, Massood. Thirty years old, a Muslim youth militant since 1972, having had a scientific (polytechnic school) training, he is indisputably the best military leader in the Afghan Resistance. He is one of the few to understand the necessity of setting in motion a modern guerrilla warfare apparatus (mobile groups, trained commandos) unlike the traditional Afghan method of waging war (mass rising, followed by a long period of inactivity, static concentration at central points, non-specialised troops). Other examples are Zabiullah of Mazar (trained at the governmental madrasa) and Ismail Khan (a former officer)—both of the same age and seasoned Jamiat militants, like Massood.

## The maintenance of a society based on law

The great originality of the Afghan Resistance is that, in the areas administered by the resistance, a military power (the members of the Resistance) co-exists with a civil power (the qazi or religious judges, who are either mullah or maulavi).

Certainly, as is always the case in wartime, the abuse of power by those possessing arms is always possible; but where the Resistance is well ordered or where the civilian society has remained dominant, the organisation of civil justice is in the hands of the clergy who, even if they generally belong to the dominant party in the area, constitute an entity which is independent of the military leaders.

We are witnessing an "Islamicisation" of civilian society. Indeed, under the old regime, justice tended to be administered by government functionaries in the well-controlled regions and the local dignitaries in the more remote areas. Now, however, the state functionaries, who applied state (and therefore secular) law, have disappeared and the traditional dignitaries have widely lost prestige. It is the qazi, who are normally products of non-state madrasa, who administer justice according to Muslim law

(Sharia). The peasants clearly favour this development.

The qazi of the Resistance are less corrupt than were those of the old regime and the system of norms that they apply is familiar to the peasantry and corresponds largely to their aspirations (unlike the reforms instituted by the communist regime). Let us take the status of land as an example. The Afghan tenant farmer was demanding not a share of the land, but the abolition of usury; and this the new qazi are striving to secure. Similarly, Islamic law guarantees the maintenance of collective rights (water, pasture and fallow land) and the end of state monopolies (the mines). Finally, the procedures of Islamic law (appearance before the qazi, friends acting as lawyers, negotiation by word of mouth, swiftness of operation) make justice more transparent to the peasant than do the slow and bureaucratic processes of a state justice which he associates with the town and with corruption.

Thus we see that the Afghan Resistance, very far from representing the mere shake-up of a traditional, obdurate society, is producing profound modifications in the religious sociology of Afghanistan. The evolution is certainly very uneven, since certain regions, like the tribal areas, are less affected by this "Islamicisation" of society. The Islamist intellectuals are few in number; the closure of the state madrasa is making the training of good ulema difficult. However, in many places, and particularly among the northern tariqa, the non-state madrasa have re-opened. There are instances of young Islamists attempting to re-open modern curriculum schools (Panjshir, Herat). But the Afghan Resistance does possess a political, military and even cultural dynamism which is making its mark in the contemporary process of Islamic revival—sufficient to distinguish it from the basmachi movements of Central Asia which, faced with the triumphant bolshevism of the twenties, could only be seen as representing the last strand of an ossified society. But, whatever its destiny may be, the Afghan Resistance, confronted with a communism which no longer convinces even its own troops, is taking the shape of an avant-garde movement.

*Olivier Roy*

# Food Aid for Afghanistan

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The political and academic debate as to whether or not rural communities in certain regions of Afghanistan are at present starving is probably inevitable for at least two reasons. First most aid agencies whether private, voluntary or governmental are acutely aware of the political ramifications of

clandestine humanitarian gestures in a country occupied by the Soviets. Secondly, the difficulties of getting sound information on which populations are most severely affected are immense in a country such as Afghanistan and they are greatly compounded by the fighting. A sad corollary is that TV pictures of beleaguered families barely surviving in caves are hard to come by and therefore there is little publicly-expressed outrage which could be used to stimulate political action.

The worst outcome would be widespread and outright famine among the civilian population in Afghanistan—if only because at that stage any action however generous would be too late. The purpose of this article is to demonstrate why Afghanistan must be seen as highly vulnerable to famine and what

kind of early action could be taken to prevent catastrophe.

Afghanistan is one of the poorest countries in the world. Before the Soviet occupation the almost wholly rural population was on a subsistence economy and in spite of sustained aid programmes there was little improvement in such basic services as primary health care, education or agricultural production. Life expectancy for adults was 40 years of age—the lowest in the world and infant mortality was estimated at 182 per thousand live births, by far the highest rate in the world.

Five years of war exacerbated this extreme poverty and fragile economy: many communities have simply been destroyed.

Apart from direct destruction of villages and fields the war is undermining the economic bases of Afghan rural life. The

initial migration of millions of refugees left innumerable farms abandoned. By the end of 1982 it was calculated that agricultural production in some provinces was reduced by as much as 80%, in the cash crops, cotton and rice production by 75% in other parts of Afghanistan (Azam Gul 1983). The continued recruitment of men to the forces ensured that cultivation and crop production continues to decline as the war goes on.

The trading networks (vitaly important in a country as topographically complex as Afghanistan) have been disrupted as shifting battle zones necessitate wide detours through mountainous country. The high cost of these disruptions has in the last two years increased exponentially because of shortages both of motorised and animal transport. Nomadic peoples who before travelled to high and remote valleys during the summer to trade with mountain communities no longer do so with the result that those communities previously dependent on purchasing grain in exchange for animals are forced to depend solely on animal products.

More generally all development programmes stopped abruptly after the invasion in December 1979 and the sudden cessation in disease control programmes, especially of tuberculosis, together with the extremely poor conditions under which people now live with inadequate nutrition, and victims both of physical and psychological stress, cannot but have increased the threat of epidemic disease.

A report on the likelihood of famine in Afghanistan (D'Souza 1984) suggested that three factors could plunge large areas of Afghanistan into immediate and severe food shortages followed by starvation. These were:—

1. Sustained military attack which would force people to leave villages and to become displaced persons.
2. Increased bombing of border provinces preventing the transport of food across the border.
3. Inadequate snowfall in winter resulting in poor irrigation flows during the growing season, or any failure in rainfall resulting in destruction of crops.

The seventh offensive in the Panjshir Valley during 1984 caused the displacement of perhaps 100,000 people into surrounding valleys and mountains. Eyewitnesses tell of families attempting to survive winter in caves with no access to food stores or any possibility of cultivating crops for the 1985 harvest. Bombing along the Afghanistan/Pakistan border greatly increased in 1984 and the feasibility of conveying significant amounts of food and other supplies grows less each month. Finally the winter snows of 1984/85 are reported to be scanty in some regions of Afghanistan and there are also reports of rain failure in the Western Hazarajat. Apart from the ominous future picture these events indicate there is no doubt that there are communities throughout Afghanistan who are dying from starvation. The extent to which this will worsen and spread will depend on how resourceful local leaders can be in purchasing and distributing food during the next few months.

The following figures are based on both the kind and quantities of food which might be required to sustain a population of displaced people with limited access to food and which is also vulnerable to the physical and psychological stress of being forced to live outside a traditional community. For convenience the food requirement figures are based on an assumed population of 100,000 people.



There are four factors to be taken into account for any successful emergency food aid programme:

- a) The size of the population at risk and its precise location must be carefully defined and monitored.
- b) Traditional, ie preferred and locally available foods, should form the basis of any food aid programme.
- c) The capacity of local organisations to distribute food effectively, ie to those in most urgent need, must be known and monitored.
- d) Assessing the impact of any food aid programme should be a part of the overall operation, eg monitoring nutritional status of children even if only a limited sample is possible.

In the Afghan context an emergency feeding programme should concentrate on providing wheat flour, oil, tea and sugar. As far as possible these items, especially wheat flour, should be purchased locally and distributed by those who already have a network of communications and the trust of local internal transport. This will be cheaper than transport of food across the border and will also help to sustain the traditional system of food-trading between surplus and deficit areas. The only trusted and effective local government system at present is carried out by the Mujahedeen collaborating with village leaders. It therefore follows that this would be the appropriate food distribution mechanism.

Given that the size of the population thought to be in need of food aid can be defined, the "upper" and "lower" limits for food requirements can be calculated. These calculations are based on the observations that acute food shortages are rarely due to absolute shortages of food but arise more often from the fact that food and transport prices rise rapidly in drought, war or civil disturbances. This means that there may be food available in local markets but people cannot buy it for lack of cash. However, some will always be in a position to buy and it is only the poorer section of the community who will be at risk. This section clearly will vary according to the context and it is often

difficult to estimate precisely. For these reasons a method based on many previous observations of other populations suffering food shortage has been devised to arrive at a reasonably accurate food requirement figure.

The "upper" limit equals the *total* food requirement for a population and really only refers to a situation of outright famine. The "lower" limit applies to situations, as described above, where some food is available but is not equally accessible to all sections of the population. The calculations, given in table form below, will also be crucially affected by two further factors.

- a) The time taken for food aid to arrive.
- b) The capacity of the recipients to distribute it to the target population.

Calculation of "upper" or "lower" limits therefore depends on whether or not there is evidence of outright famine or sudden and large congregations of people in a given area short of food (ie the refugee camp). At present reports from rural areas of Afghanistan suggest that the "lower" limit calculation is the most relevant.

The following calculation is based on the assumption that of every 1,000 people in a population at risk:

100 (10%) will require full feeding by food distribution	
200 (20%) will require half feeding by food distribution	
400 (40%) will require quarter feeding by food distribution	
300 (30%) will require no feeding by food distribution	

To ensure that the "at risk" population will receive a minimum of 1,750 Kcal/day/head which is considered to be an acceptable emergency maintenance diet, the actual food requirements would be as follows:

#### Cereals for 100,000 people/day

10,000 will require full feeding × 500 gms	= 5,000 kg
20,000 will require half feeding × 250 gms	= 5,000 kg
40,000 will require quarter feeding × 125 gms	= 5,000 kg
30,000 will require no feeding	

Therefore the mean total *daily* amount required would be 15,000 kg 15 metric tonnes.

Weekly requirement	= 105 metric tonnes
Monthly requirement	= 420 metric tonnes
(60,000 sec—Afghan unit of wt = 7 kg.	

### Tea, Sugar and Oil

Using the calculation above, ie that only 10,000 of the displaced population will require total subsidy of tea, sugar and oil and the rest of the population will require decreasing amounts, the following requirements can be arrived at. (In practice, for these food items, it is easier to calculate the requirement per family than per individual). Ten thousand people is roughly equivalent to 20,000 families. The monthly family requirement for those families who cannot otherwise obtain tea, sugar and oil, would be as follows: Tea: 2 kg; Sugar: 3 kg; Oil (ghee) 2 kg.

Rounding up these figures for 20,000 families would give the following requirements for each month of the emergency period taking into account the differing needs of the total population.

	Tea	Sugar	Oil
Full rations	4,000 kg (4mt)	6,000 kg (6mt)	4,000 kg (4mt)
Half rations	4,000 kg (4mt)	6,000 kg (6mt)	4,000 kg (4mt)
Quarter rations	4,000 kg (4mt)	6,000 kg (6mt)	6,000 kg (6mt)
TOTALS	12,000 (12mt)	18,000 (18mt)	12,000 (12mt)
Seer	1,714	2,571	1,714

Therefore the estimated total requirement for this particular population for each month of the emergency period is as follows:

Wheat flour = 420 metric tonnes  
Tea = 12 metric tonnes  
Sugar = 18 metric tonnes  
Oil = 12 metric tonnes.

These figures take no account of such a particularly vulnerable group as the very young. If however, outright famine were to occur in any region of Afghanistan (ie a sudden and absolute lack of food due either to exponential price rises and corresponding lack of purchasing power or a siege where food sources normally accessible are suddenly cut off and people begin to die from starvation) special food supplements would have to be added to those above calculations in order to prevent widespread deaths of vulnerable persons in the population.

Using the same figure of 100,000 persons "at risk" and assuming that Afghanistan has a population structure typical of most developing countries, 33% of the population will be under the age of 10 years. Of these 33,000 children approximately 3,000 will be likely to require a food supplement and 300 will be in need of what is called "therapeutic" feeding, ie special rations given under supervision.

#### 1. Supplementary Feeding

An adequate food supplement for children in need of a food supplement is calculated as 50 grams of Dried Skimmed Milk (DSM) per child (3,000) per day.

$3,000 \times 50 \text{ gms of DSM/day} = 150 \text{ kgs/day}$

$150 \text{ kgs} \times 90 \text{ metric tonnes plus } 20\% = 16 \text{ metric tonnes DSM.}$

#### 2. Therapeutic Feeding

The requirement for this sector of the under 10 years population (ie 300 would be 200 grams of Dried Skimmed Milk/child/day. For a three month period the calculation is as follows:

$300 \times 200 \text{ grms of DSM/Day} = 60 \text{ kgs}$

$60 \text{ kgs} \times 90 \text{ days} = 5.4 \text{ metric tonnes of DSM.}$

These figures are given as a guideline to potential donors. Given the scale of current emergency food aid programmes to other areas in the world which are in the grip of devastating famines, the amounts given here are very modest and the cost, at this stage, low. The crucial point to emphasise is that if the events outlined in the introduction to the article continue and there is a sudden famine then the logistic difficulties in providing aid rapidly, whether in cash or kind, would be so great as to make the operation impossible. Action now to forestall starvation in highly vulnerable areas is possible and the long-term advantage of acting in advance would be to create the channels for a limited supply of food to a limited population for a limited period. Increasing aid, should the need arise, would undoubtedly be far more practicable if it could be delivered via a fully functioning distribution network.

*Dr Frances D'Souza*

## Afghanaid

Afghanaid is a registered charity (no 282353) which aims to provide humanitarian aid to Afghans in need.

In its early days, Afghanaid gave funds to two charities already working in the field, to help with existing aid projects. We supported the Austrian Relief Committee which operates medical aid centres in the Gandaf and Baghicha refugee camps in Pakistan's North-West Frontier Province and the Swedish Aid Committee to provide medical aid inside Afghanistan. Afghanaid also shipped £50,000 worth of drugs and medicines, provided by Roche and ICI, to medical centres in the refugee camps. But Afghanaid now has its own office in Peshawar, Pakistan, from which we administer a growing number of projects.

In May this year Afghanaid sponsored a research document entitled "The Threat of Famine in Afghanistan" by Dr Frances D'Souza. Five years of war have caused a critical food shortage in rural areas of the country; 60% of the civilian population are refugees either in Pakistan and Iran or living as internal refugees. Those internal refugees who have moved to the cities are the ones really at risk and without help will face starvation this winter.

We are sending in some money to buy food for these people as a pilot project to demonstrate to other aid agencies that such an operation can be done with accountability. For just one of the communities of internal refugees (of approximately 100,000) it will cost £250,000 each month to feed them. To prevent the sort of disaster we now see in

Ethiopia it is imperative to get as many aid agencies as possible to help and to raise that money.

Another major concern inside Afghanistan is getting war wounded to the border where they can receive expert medical treatment. Transport is prohibitively expensive so many Afghans try to make the journey on foot and often never reach the border. One International aid agency says three out of every four wounded die before they reach the border through lack of transport. We hope to help with the problem by raising funds to provide an ambulance system.

A group of English doctors have now set up a clinic inside Afghanistan and are working hard not just to treat the war wounded and sick but to launch vaccination programmes for TB which is rampant in the country.

On 29 September 1983, Sandy Gall's book on Afghanistan was published by Sidgwick and Jackson. At the same time Sandy launched a charity appeal on behalf of Afghanaid to raise funds to buy artificial limbs for Afghans mutilated by Soviet bombs. This fund is still steadily growing. We also hope to send a trained prosthetist/orthotist to establish a workshop in Lady Reading Hospital, Peshawar.

We also have a project to establish paraplegics, injured in the war, as tailors once they leave hospital which enables them to live in their own communities financially secure and with the dignity of an occupation.

Education, or rather the lack of it, is also an increasing worry and problem to the Afghans. Continuous offensives, lack of funds etc make education difficult to provide. Any available funds have, until now, been channelled into other areas such as food and medicine to help combat the potential hazards of starvation and disease. Education is of enormous importance to the Afghans. After much research, working with Afghans, we have developed a series of basic textbooks in reading, writing, mathematics and religion for primary schools. A programme of support for primary schools in Afghanistan has just begun and we are raising funds to help.

On the home front, at the start of next year we hope to launch regional support groups in this country. We will also publish the first issue of our quarterly magazine/newsletter.

It goes without saying that we have a lot of work ahead of us and in order to be effective we need funds so fund-raising is a vital part of our programme. In 1983 Afghanaid held a Charity Ball at the Cafe Royal, London, which raised £13,000. Personal donations have also raised a considerable sum. We have several fund-raising events in the pipe-line and plan a national campaign in the press in 1985.

Afghanaid is associated with the Afghanistan Support Committee, an all-party pressure group, which provides what limited secretariat services are needed. The two organisations are independent of each other, have separate committees, but cooperate when necessary.

# The Angel King

## “What pleasure have great Princes”

If, coming new to it, you would learn something of Afghanistan and of the culture and civilization of Western Central Asia, of which Afghanistan is the crossroad, you might well begin with the Babur-Nama\*. It is the autobiography, cast in the form of annals and diary, of Zahiruddin Muhammed Babur. He was born in 1483 and he died in 1530. That makes him a contemporary of our own, and far less admirable, Henry VIII. In his 12th year (June 1494) he became ruler of Farghana and Samarcand. In his 22nd year he accepted the surrender of Kabul and thereafter was ruler of Afghanistan. He went on to conquer India, of which he was the first Mughal Emperor.

But he detested the climate there and at the end of his days went back to Kabul, for he loved its gardens and fruit, of which he was so great a connoisseur, and it is there that he is buried, suitably enough, in an old garden above the river, outside the town. His memorial inscription reads thus:

*Only this mosque of beauty, this temple of nobility, constructed for the prayer of saints and the epiphany of cherubs, was fit to stand in so venerable a sanctuary as this highway of archangels, this theatre of heaven, the light garden of the god-forgiven Angel King whose rest is in the Garden of Heaven, Zahiruddin Muhammad Babur the Conqueror.*

Babur, I suspect, would have preferred a less baroque and lapidary epitaph, for he wrote a terse, word-thrifty and laconic prose himself. The language he wrote in was Turki (which, apart from some overlapping of vocabulary, has nothing in common with Turkish) and according to his devoted translator, Mrs Annette Beveridge, his memoirs lose little or nothing in her English version which runs to 715 closely-printed crown octavo pages.

Few Kings have attempted autobiography: Napoleon wrote some rather tedious memoirs on St Helena which sustain Jacob Burckhardt's contention that he was a "personified absurdity". Caesar's "Commentaries" are the despatches of a General rather than the recollections of a Monarch. Marcus Aurelius, it is true, taught us one way of living in his "Consolations" and Carlyle composed a magnificent self-portrait of Oliver Cromwell in his edition of the "Letters and Speeches". But amongst great potentates Babur is unique, for I know of no other who has left us a self-revelation so pure and intimate, to borrow the perceptive phrase of Professor Peter Levi. He is much more impersonal than Samuel Pepys or Kilvert, even so as we finish his book we feel we know Babur as well as we know them; that is to say we know him in his

plenitude as a person—as a man capable of human (and humane) response to what everyday confronted him. But the world of seventeenth and nineteenth century England is one that is wholly familiar to us since we are daily *habitués* of its monuments, its thought and its way of life. On the other hand the world of Babur is as utterly remote as Xanadu: in his company we explore late Mediaeval Central Asia as seen through the perceptive eyes of an observant monarch whose political skills amounted to genius and whose sustained interest in the tangible visible world can only be compared to that of such great novelists as Dickens and Tolstoy.

If, for instance, you would like to know something of what the Three Wise Men endured as they travelled to Bethlehem then read his description of a Himalayan snow-storm: "that night the snow fell in such an amazing blizzard of cutting wind that every man feared for his life. The storm had become extremely violent by the time we reached . . . a mountain cave. We dismounted at its mouth. Deep snow! A one-man road! And even on that stamped-down and trampled road pitfalls for horses! The days at their shortest! . . . I did not go into the cave though people kept saying, "come inside" because this was in my mind, "some of my men in snow and storm. I in the comfort of a warm house! The whole horde outside in misery and pain, I inside sleeping at ease . . . what strong men stand I will stand; for as the Persian proverb says, to die with friends is a nuptial". Till the bed time prayer I sat through that blizzard of snow and wind in the dug-out, the snow-fall being such that my head, back and ears were overlaid four hands thick".

This is positively Homeric or Biblical.

Babur was a devout Muslim and, until he was 30, never touched wine, despite a strong inclination to do so. But he seems to have succumbed in what he called the "refined town of Heri". Even then his tact of spirit is made delicately manifest: "where should I drink if not here? Here where all the chattles and utensils of luxury and comfort are gathered and in use . . . I determined to cross that stream; but it occurred to me that as I had not taken wine in Mirza's house, or from his hand, who was to me as an elder brother, things might find way into his mind if I took wine in his younger brother's house and from his hand. Having so said to myself, I mentioned my doubt and difficulty. Said they, "both the excuse and the obstacle are reasonable".

It is startling to read this short essay on vinous decorum written so unexpectedly by a

person directly descended on the one side from Jenghis Khan and on the other from Timour (Marlowe's Tamburlane). Even more startling to read of Babur's casual attitude to jewellery: the Koh-i-noor diamond is now set in the Imperial State crown of England which, electronically guarded by all the resources of contemporary caution, reposes in the Tower of London. Once, for a matter of minutes, it belonged to Babur. Humayun, his son, captured it in battle as booty and gave it to his father who was then staying at Agra. Later, in his diary, Babur says laconically: "every appraiser has estimated its value at two and a half days food for the entire world . . . I just gave it him back".

He had a sharp eye for fellow Monarchs and their courtiers: of Sultan Husain Mirza he asserts: "on a Feast-day (he) would sometimes set up a little three-fold turban, wound broadly and badly, stick a heron's plume in it and so go to Prayers".

Of the same Sultan's Chief Justice (and rarely for him Babur moralises): "on the dulcimer he had no equal and he invented the shake on the dulcimer . . . (but) he became the captive of a sinful disease through his excesses, outlived his hands and feet, tasted the agonies of varied fortune for several years and departed from the world under that affliction".

"outlived his hands and feet", that is the phrase of someone who knew how to write".

The Babur-Nama is one of the best of all bed-side books crammed not only with heron-feathers, diamonds and poxed chief-justices but also with informed and entertaining notes on archery, haggis, calligraphy, mango-preserve, painters, eye-bewitchment, prosody, horse-accountments, blood-vengeance, choreography and war. Nor is that all, for it stands high in the great tradition of Muslim geographic and topographical prose and constitutes something very like a summation of Aubrey's "Brief Lives" and a "Dictionary of National Biography" for late Mediaeval Central Asia and India.

To read it is to remember, or to discover, that Afghanistan, despite its present sufferings, is heir to one of the greatest of all human civilizations, and one of which we, in our complacent West, are still so damagingly ignorant.

Anthony Freemantle

*\*Translated by Annette S Beveridge and last reprinted in 1979 by Sang-e-Meel Publications, Lahore, Pakistan. In London it may be obtained from Luzac & Co, 46 Great Russell Street WC1B 3PE at £15. A paper-back edition is urgently needed.*



# Winter offensives II: Panjshir Valley

The Panjshir Valley, an area close to Kabul and the Salang Highway, the main supply route from the Soviet Union, has a relatively well organised resistance. Under the leadership of Ahmed Shah Massoud, it has proved strong and consistent despite repeated attacks by Soviet and Government forces in the past five years.

So far this winter, the Mujahedeen have had some success in operations aimed at Government posts in the lower half of the valley. One such post, Poshghoor, has been besieged for months. With the Mujahedeen cutting the land routes and holding the high ground, the Soviets have found it virtually impossible to bring in supplies. According to Resistance sources, for two weeks from the end of November, a Mujahedeen offensive led to the capture of a number of

Government positions around the base, and many soldiers were killed. Only intensified action by the Soviets, including the landing of Paratroops and the arrival of armoured vehicles, prevented the total seizure of the area. Latest reports indicate the area is still under siege.

Mujahedeen attacks are also reported against other bases in the Valley, and a convoy on the Salang Highway.

In an effort to form a more co-ordinated resistance, some commanders from areas in the north met in the Panjshir in December, and agreed:

1. Continued work to establish Resistance bases;
2. A committee to supervise and co-ordinate the activities of the Resistance in the North;

3. The planning of co-ordinated action against the Soviet forces during this winter.

But for Massoud, the immediate problem is lack of food for his Mujahedeen, and the many civilians who have been forced to leave their homes because of Soviet attacks. In a letter written in December, he said his main difficulties are "lack of cash, food, warm clothes, and enough ammunition". But heavy snow has closed most supply routes, a situation that will only be relieved when spring comes.

## Brits in Afghanistan: Peter Jouvenal

**Julian Gearing, a photojournalist, worked for CBS News with Peter Jouvenal on his recent journey to the Panjshir Valley. This was his fourth visit to Afghanistan and he specialises in reports from difficult and remote areas of Asia and Africa.**



*Photograph of Peter Jouvenal*

After 24 trips into Afghanistan since the beginning of the war, cameraman Peter Jouvenal is probably the most experienced of Afghan hands. In five years he has moved on from still photography to television news films, broadcast both in Britain and the United States.

Wars, by their very nature, are difficult and dangerous to report on the spot, and there are times when even the best photographers are unable to get the shots they want.

One such occasion for Peter, was whilst he was with a Mujahedeen commander on the roof of a house watching a battle nearby.

"We were sitting there drinking Coke,

when a Soviet Mi-8 helicopter started flying towards us. It had obviously been hit by the sound of its engine, and two helicopter gunships were shadowing it. At this point the commander ran downstairs rather quickly, leaving me drinking Coke, desperately wanting to take my camera out as it flew past, but frightened to do as I could see the pilots and they could see me".

Keeping calm in difficult situations is something he learnt in the army. Having always been a "bit of a military buff", he was 17 when he first considered becoming a war photographer. The army was the obvious choice in order to receive the training, he felt essential, to handle this job. Joining the 7th Parachute Regt Royal Horse Artillery because it appeared to offer opportunities for good photography, his success in this was noteworthy, and he received an exemplary conduct report when he left after three years, in 1979.

In Afghanistan at that time, before the Russians moved in, there was a small, little known, guerrilla war being fought against the communist government. This was a war that Peter, as a photographer, felt he could take his time over, without being under pressure. The Russians rolling over the border in December put a stop to this idea. Media interest was strong and it was obvious that Afghanistan would attract many professional photographers. But after a month it became clear that "there were no good photographs coming out" of the country. Here was a gap that needed to be filled. So, at the age of 23, he sold his motorbike and stereo, and with £500 in his pocket, he set off by bus for Victoria Station, and "popped up a month later in Peshawar", Pakistan.

The town of Peshawar was, and still is, the centre for arranging trips with the Mujahedeen into Afghanistan.

"In those days there were too many journalists trying to cover the war. The Mujahedeen groups were inexperienced and took in too many, mostly to Pushtun areas, which didn't reflect the true state of the war. The trips were badly organised, little was seen, and the journalists got fed up. The press started reporting that nothing was really happening in Afghanistan".

His first trip inside was a fiasco. No sooner had the commander of the group he was with stepped over the border into the province of Kunar, that he decided not to go any further. Coming back they were promptly arrested by the Pakistani authorities (the first, but certainly not the last time he has been arrested).

On another occasion, in Nangahar, the Mujahedeen took fright when they saw one tank attacking a village, and came straight back to Pakistan.

However, not all trips were like these. On his second trip inside, his courage in getting in close produced photographs for an award winning article in an Italian magazine.

"In those days I was fascinated by the fighting. Without a return ticket back to England, the incentive to take good pictures was obvious. It had to pay".

But in the competitive world of freelance photojournalism, earning enough solely from the sale of photographs was difficult. So he taught himself how to use 16 mm and Super 8 cameras, eventually moving on to what he uses today, video equipment which allows him to be more mobile and proves easier to sell.

His first trip to the Panjshir Valley was on assignment for the Sunday Times Magazine in 1981, where he met Ahmed Shah Massoud, the brilliant Resistance leader.

"I was impressed by the Mujahedeen in this area, compared with other groups I had seen. They were better organised and had good leaders. Also 80% of their weapons were Soviet, all captured, a good indication of how successful they were". A year later he returned to the area, on a four month trip, his longest inside the country.

How well organised the trips are can make the difference between good and bad reports. This he feels is where the main problem of coverage lies.

"The Mujahedeen don't know how to look after journalists properly and don't realise the potential of publicity. The trips are often poorly organised and lack competent guides.

But some journalists, and editors, are to blame. Often trips are too short, to areas that don't reflect the true state of the war. Those that are unfit and impatient often clash with the Mujahedeen, and come back with bad reports. Some don't even go in at all, and come back from Peshawar as "experts" on Afghanistan.

Those journalists with pot-bellies, accustomed to travelling around in taxis, should stay away. Fitness, self-reliance, initiative, and a military background are assets when attempting to cover the war".

These are what he looks for when choosing a film crew—together with a strong stomach—a definite advantage as standards of food-hygiene can be far from ideal.

Having spent five years covering the war, how does he see the situation now?

"Some areas are doing well. There are some good commanders, such as, Massoud in the Panjshir, Zabiullah from Mazar-i-Sharif, Ismail Khan from Herat, and Abdul Haq from Kabul. But the tribal system in the Pushtoon areas suppresses good commanders. Young, competent commanders are turned down in favour of older ineffective tribal leaders.

Corruption amongst Mujahedeen groups is extensive, and there is too much reliance on money from outside sources. Some money intended for weapons and supplies, disappears into cars, houses, hotels and personal bank accounts".

Peter is not alone in thinking that the US are using the Mujahedeen as cannon fodder. It is clear that they don't want them to lose, but in order to keep the Soviets bogged down, they don't want them to win either. As one American diplomat has been quoted as saying, "our biggest worry is that we will run out of Mujahedeen".

Often what aid is given to the Resistance goes to ineffective groups.

"Just because someone wears a business suit and a Rolex watch doesn't mean he is the one to back. The right person may be a young man, dressed in the clothes of his fellow Mujahedeen, inside Afghanistan.

The American aid people are mucking up the war. Because they are frightened of backing the Muslim Fundamentalists, who are involved in most of the effective resistance, they are backing the wrong horse—the "moderates", few of whom are putting up effective resistance inside the country".

One point Peter cannot emphasise enough is the Mujahedeen's need for proper training. The idea that because the Afghans have always been fighters, they know how to use weapons, is a myth that dies hard. On one occasion, a Mujahedeen commander using a mortar, dropped the bomb in the wrong way up, blowing up the equipment and losing two fingers in the process.

"Once ammunition starts hitting the

target, that will be a big step forward for the Mujahedeen".

Last summer, whilst Peter and I were filming in the Panjshir Valley for CBS News, we were caught with some Mujahedeen in a Soviet offensive. As wave after wave of helicopters flew over, the Mujahedeen were unable or too intimidated to respond. Only later did some form of resistance start up.

As for the Russians, their tactics have been changing to deal more effectively with the Resistance. Specialised groups of helicopter troops, as we saw in the Panjshir, are being used to surround, kill and capture Mujahedeen. The last year has also seen more frequent attacks and ambushes on supply routes into the country.

For Peter calculated risks are part of the job. On one occasion in Nangahar, he was put in a building said by the local commander to be a "safe place", in order to watch the Mujahedeen attack a nearby government post.

"I was a little disconcerted to see mortar

shrapnel all over the floor, but thought maybe the commander knew what he was talking about. Well, the first round the government fired landed 25 yards from the building I was in. Then a second round landed 20 yards away. I thought it was time to get out of the building. As I was running out through the entrance, a mortar bomb landed just behind the door. I dropped in the doorway. One moment I had been running and then the next thing I knew there was a whistling in my ears and all this dust. I didn't know what had happened. Then I picked myself up and ran out.

The next day I went back and looked behind that door. The other side was plastered with shrapnel".

With only one and half inches of wood between him and a mortar bomb, it was the only time he thought he should look for a new job!

J. Gearing



# The Afghanistan Support Committee

The Afghanistan Support Committee is an all-party pressure group chaired by The Viscount Cranborne MP. Our aim is to keep the plight of Afghan people in the forefront of the minds of the British people, and to support the Afghan Resistance to the Soviet invasion.

We do not support any one Resistance group nor do we involve ourselves in any military aid. Our purpose is rather to maximise press and media coverage of the war in Afghanistan; to ensure that the case of the Mujahedeen is heard, and to produce and disseminate information together with our own publicity material.

Whenever possible we use volunteer workers which helps to minimise our small administrative costs. Any money raised over our basic needs is passed on to Afghanaid to relieve suffering inside Afghanistan.

Afghanaid is an independent charity which has a policy of funding relief work inside Afghanistan directly to the victims of the war. Their secretariat services are provided by the Afghanistan Support Committee, but the two organisations are distinct with separate policy-making committees.

The Committee includes MPs from the Conservative, Labour, SDP, Liberal and Scottish National parties and a number of active independent members.

## NEWSFLASH

The sad news of the death of Commander Zabiullah of Mazar-i-Sharif was confirmed at the time of going to press.

The 30 year old commander (real name Abdul Qadir), mentioned many times in the articles of the magazine, was killed, together with eight Mujahedeen, on 14 December 1984, when his jeep hit a landmine planted by another Resistance group, Harakat-i-Inqilab-i-Islami. His death is a major loss to the Resistance.

A full feature on Zabiullah and his Resistance in Mazar-i-Sharif will appear in the next issue.

## Join a County Support Group and help the Afghans

Four million Afghans have fled their country and are now flooding refugee camps in Pakistan and Iran. As it happens these are the fortunate ones if by "fortunate" is meant that international aid can reach them which, thankfully, it is.

What of the other 11 million, men, women and children, still over the border in Soviet-controlled Afghanistan beyond the reach of the international aid agencies? After four years of war, and now facing acute famine, they desperately need food and medical supplies. Someone must help them.

The response from European countries is growing in pace; Austria, Belgium, France, Sweden, West Germany and of course Britain are all playing their part in active co-operation.

The Afghanistan Support Committee, with its sister organisation, AfghanAid, is the driving force here. Now it has started to build a network of Support Groups throughout the country and is urgently seeking help from all manner of people.

For a start we need a chairman for each area together with an honorary secretary and treasurer and we ask anyone who can help to

contact us without delay by writing or telephoning:

**Romey Fullerton**  
**Director**  
**Afghanistan Support Committee**  
**18 Charing Cross Road**  
**London WC2N 0HR**  
**Tel: 01-379 7218.**

Each County Support Group will have four main tasks:

- to draw attention in the UK to what is happening in Afghanistan under Soviet domination.
- to support and succour those who have remained inside Afghanistan with food, medical help and supplies.
- to raise money on behalf of Afghanaid, the ASC charitable trust, for humanitarian and non-military purposes in Afghanistan.
- to keep local press and radio stations informed on all matters pertaining to freedom in Afghanistan.

**THESE ARE THE REASONS WHY WE  
NEED HELP IN EVERY CORNER OF  
THE COUNTRY.**

**DO PLEASE CONTACT US SOON.**

If you would like to become an Associate Member of the Afghanistan Support Committee please fill in the form below. For a minimum annual subscription of £10 (more will be gratefully received), you will receive our magazine, published quarterly, invitations to fund-raising events and to our Annual General Meeting.

PLEASE COMPLETE IN BLOCK CAPITALS

NAME .....

ADDRESS .....

I enclose my subscription.

Please send to the Afghanistan Support Committee,  
18 Charing Cross Road, London WC2N 0HR.

*Articles that appear in "Afghanistan" express the personal viewpoint of contributors and do not necessarily represent the views of the Afghanistan Support Committee.*

*"Afghanistan" welcomes both contributions and comment. They should be sent to the Editor, c/o Afghanistan Support Committee, 18 Charing Cross Road, London WC2N 0HR.*